

REPORT.

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THE School Committee of the Town of Hamilton, for the year ending March, 1856, present their

ANNUAL REPORT.

Impressed with the responsibility developing upon us as the guardians of our youth for one school year, an era in their existence upon which so much of the future depends, it has been our endeavor to be governed by no motive but that which should in our opinion be productive of the greatest good to those for whom school appropriations are made.

In the discharge of our duties we have endeavored to fix upon the mind of the scholar the idea of a thorough acquaintance with the elementary branches, before aspiring to those of a higher order; and also to avoid the too prevalent idea that a great scholar is the one who can simply commit to memory the largest number of pages, or ride rough shod through an arithmetic without stopping for a moment to consider their meaning or digest a rule.

In passing to a detailed account of the several Schools, we will endeavor to be as brief as possible;—but where duty conflicts with inclination we must yield to the former.

By a vote of the town, the sum of \$600 was raised for the support of schools, to be equally divided between the four school districts—\$160 of which is appropriated to the summer schools, or \$40 to each district;—the balance together with the sum received from the Mass. school fund for the winter schools.

NORTH SCHOOL DISTRICT, NO. 1.

The Summer Term in this district was taught by Miss Caroline E. Smith, of Topsfield—a young lady of eminent qualities as a teacher. It commenced May 28th and closed Sept. 3d—a term of 12 weeks. At the commencement of this school a good degree of interest was manifested by both teacher and scholar,

and gave promise of a profitable term—and its closing examination was highly satisfactory. The order of the school was good, and the method of instruction such as apparently to leave a lasting impression on the minds of the pupils. The interest in the school exercises was such as to assure us of the fidelity of the teacher to her arduous duty, and the willingness of the scholar to obey and profit by her instruction.

The Winter Term of this School commenced December 3d, and closed February 23, 1856—a term of 11 weeks.

This school was taught by Mr. Wm. A. Brown, of this town, a gentleman too well known to require any introduction from the Committee. At the commencement of the term, this school gave strong evidence of the benefit it had received from the Summer term. The arrangement of the classes, the order, and the promptness of the scholars in recitations, gave promise of a profitable term to the scholar, and honor to the teacher.

At the closing examination our anticipations were fully realized. The improvement in reading—the correctness in spelling and spelling book exercises—the proficiency in English grammar—the neatness of many of the writing books—the recitations in geography and history—and the thoroughness of instruction in arithmetic, were all creditable to the teacher, and gave unmistakable assurance that he had succeeded in interesting the scholar in the importance of a proper use of the advantages of his school privileges.

The several specimens of compositions to which we listened, were highly creditable to their authors. We very much regret that more could not have been induced to have given their attention to this very important branch of an education.

We do not hesitate to say, that we think the appropriations of school money in this district, have been judiciously and profitably expended, and that the parents of the scholars have been fully compensated by the progress of their children.

WEST SCHOOL DISTRICT, No. 2.

The Summer Term of this School was taught by Miss Sophia F. Lovering, of this town, a young lady of good capacity for a teacher. It commenced May 28th, and closed August 18th—a term of twelve weeks.

At the closing examination of this school, it was evident that the teacher had faithfully and creditably discharged her duties,

and the pupils had advanced in their studies to a degree highly creditable to themselves and teacher. The order of the school was excellent, at each examination; and the recitations prompt, energetic, and correct to an unusual extent. The teacher, by devotion to her duties and a spirit of kindness, had won the affection of her pupils, so much so, as to appear, that on their part, it was a pleasure to yield to her every wish cheerfully.

The Winter Term, taught by Mr. George F. Merrill, of New Hampshire. This was the second term of this teacher in this school—it commenced December 3d, and closed February 9th, 1856—a term of 9 weeks and 5 days.

At the opening of this school it appeared decidedly advantageous, and from the experience of the teacher the previous winter, we had every reason to suppose that a profitable term was presented to the scholar.

At its close, it was apparent that much had been accomplished during the term; not so much, however, as we could have wished. The exercises in the several branches were generally very satisfactory. There are many good readers in this school. In spelling, there was an apparent want of the cultivation of the memory; in the other exercises there was a good degree of advancement, particularly in arithmetic. The solutions of problems on the black-board, gave evidence of the proficiency of the scholar, which would well compare with those who are favored with much greater advantages.

There seemed to be a want of energy in the school, which made it appear to disadvantage before the visitors. Still your committee are satisfied that it possesses a talent, which needs only an efficient, prompt and energetic teacher, with the co-operation of the parents, to bring it out.

SOUTH SCHOOL DISTRICT, No. 3.

The Summer Term of this School was taught by Miss Fannie D. Rich, of Vermont. It commenced May 28th, and closed August 18th—12 weeks.

The order of this school, at each visitation by the committee, was fair. The exercises showing that the teacher had evidently bestowed much labor to promote the advancement of her pupils, and the recitations exhibited a marked improvement, in the several branches of study.

Winter Term, taught by Mr. J. P. Lovering, of this town—this was his second term in this school, and he began under favorable auspices. It commenced December 3d, and closed February 22d—11 weeks.

At the first examination of this school it gave promise of a successful term; its organization was complete at the start, and it was early in good working order.

At the last visitation by the committee, a very commendable progress had been made in all the branches of study. The scholar not only committing to memory his lesson, but apparently, thoroughly understanding it. Much attention had been given to the elementary branches, and in all the exercises a proficiency had been attained, rarely equalled in so short a time. The exercises in declamation, and specimens of composition by several scholars, were highly creditable. On the whole, we are free to say that our anticipations were fully realized, and that the teacher has fully sustained his previous reputation, of a good instructor and disciplinarian.

EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT, No. 4.

Summer Term, taught by Miss Edna Burnham, of Essex. It commenced May 28th, and closed August 10th—11½ weeks.

At the first examination of this school it was found to be in good order, the classes well arranged, and although a stranger to her pupils, she had so far won their respect, as to appear as an old acquaintance, and we could not but think that they were to have a school which should be of a high rank. Nor at its close were we disappointed. The exercises at the last examination were very satisfactory. The order, excellent, and the progress commendable. The perfect control of the teacher, and the machinery by which the school was carried on, were alike commendable to the teacher and pupil.

In this school, the teacher was in her first year of teaching, and her method of instruction and devotion to duty, are such as to insure her success in the future, if continued.

Winter Term, taught by B. F. Peirce, of Maine—commenced December 3d, and closed February 22d—11 weeks 5 days.

This school at the opening appeared to retain much of the influence of the summer term, and gave promise of success. At its close, there were many gratifying results of the labors

of the teacher. The recitations of the pupils were generally correct—the order was fair—the exercises in declamation were highly creditable. Much attention had been bestowed upon the several branches, but there was a great lack of energy in the school. Many of the scholars were guilty of a great error, in commencing in their studies, beyond their depth. The teacher should have been assured that no one should begin farther along, than by actual examination, he or she may understand. At the first examination of this school, we found a general aversion to the study of English grammar, it being entirely excluded, but were much gratified to find a class at its close.

The want of energy in this school made it appear to a disadvantage. Although the school was very small, yet the time consumed in the examination exceeded that of the others in similar exercises. Although this school did not come up to our anticipations, yet we are of opinion an average advantage has been the result of this term.

WAGES OF TEACHERS.

SUMMER TERM.

Dist. No. 1	\$13 1-3	per mo.		Dist. No. 3,	\$13 1-3	per mo.
" "	2	\$13 1-3	" "	" "	4,	\$14 " "

WINTER TERM.

Dist. No. 1,	\$35	per month		Dist. No. 3,	\$35	per month.
" "	2,	\$40 " "	" "	" "	4,	\$35 " "

VALUE OF BOARD.

Summer Term	-	-	-	\$2	per week.
Winter Term	-	-	-	\$3	per week.

ATTENDANCE.

NORTH DISTRICT.

Whole number different pupils,	Summer,	28
Average attendance,	"	23 1-11
" " "	Winter,	46
" " "	"	40

WEST DISTRICT.

Whole number different pupils,	Summer,	30
Average attendance,	"	20 49-65
" " "	Winter,	41
" " "	"	30

SOUTH DISTRICT.

"	"	Summer,	43
Average	"	"	32 64-65
"	"	Winter,	62
"	"	"	45 33-122

EAST DISTRICT.

"	"	Summer,	17
Average	"	"	12 46-65
"	"	Winter,	26
"	"	"	20 22-65

Whole number of children in Hamilton, on the first day of May, 1855, between the ages of 5 and 15, are 154.

Before closing this Report we cannot avoid the expression of our opinion upon some subjects connected with our Schools.—At the examination of the Teachers for the Winter Term they were told that we should expect them to require of each scholar, of a suitable age, exercises in composition and declamation,—and we found that although many in the schools availed themselves of its advantages, yet there was not that attention to it that there should have been in any one school. A prominent error in our school instruction is in not placing a sufficient importance in the elementary branches,—the basis upon which the whole structure of Education rests. The irregular attendance of many of the scholars is a source of much regret, and if the parents of the children could be made sensible of the disadvantages arising from such a source, this evil we think would be remedied, or at least very much lessened. Nearly every scholar has his associates in study; he is one of a class, and his absence must necessarily either affect the progress of the class, or he must lose that part of the exercise which is performed in his absence;—this fact alone we think is sufficient, if properly

considered, to induce every reflecting mind of its importance. Other reasons might be given why this evil should be avoided ; but we will rest the merits of the case on this one suggestion, hoping that it will be duly considered, and that another school year may show a regularity of attendance unparrelled in the history of our schools.

Not only should parents insist upon a regular attendance at seasonable hours, but should occasionally themselves visit the school-room to encourage a love of knowledge in the children. Frequent visits by parents and others interested in the cause of Education, tend much to dispel the monotony of a school-room, and relieve the scholar from that dread of a visit from the committee. We have found that those schools which have most frequently been visited by those interested in the welfare of the pupils, are the most free from restraint, and the members give a better account of themselves, and consequently add to the reputation of the teacher.

We would also recommend that in some of our Districts that the experiment of Female teachers, for both Summer and Winter terms, be adopted. Such a course would certainly give to the school a great addition of school weeks ; and when we consider the average age of our scholars in the winter schools, which is, as shown by the registers, to be but 11 years, we think that each week would be at least equal to the same time spent by a male teacher.

We feel confident that if the experiment were tried by employing suitable female teachers, that we should find an equal capacity to govern and ability to instruct, to that which we have had in the male teachers. If then we find this equality let us not lose the advantages to be gained by the change.— Every week properly spent by our children in the school-room is of incalculable value, and it should be our aim to give to them as many as possible, if they are of a proper character.— We hope that our successors will duly consider this suggestion, and if found to be based upon reason, they will adopt it.

During the past year the Committee feel a pleasure in saying that nothing has transpired to prevent the action of the several parts of the machinery which moves on the Educational interest of this community, from working harmoniously together. Local interest, or sectional feeling have not been brought into action, either directly or indirectly. The Examining and Prudential Committee, having alike the interests of the

Schools at heart, have been as a unit. And that unity of action and oneness of purpose, for the future cultivation of the intellect to the best possible advantage, may be the governing principle of those who may hereafter be intrusted with the care of our Schools, is the desire of your Committee, at the close of their term of office.

GEORGE NORRIS, JR.,	} <i>School Committee</i>
NATH'L WHIPPLE,	
CALEB W. DODGE,	
ISAAC A. DODGE,	
CHARLES MARSHALL,	} <i>of</i>
	} <i>Hamilton.</i>

HAMILTON, March, 1856.